

# CCID official responds to Delta pact

## *Believes farmers are still giving up too much water*

The Dec. 15 signing by federal and state water officials of the Delta Water Quality Standards was designed to guarantee stable water supplies to farms, cities and environmental purposes.

The agreement was hailed as a peaceful end to a long battle over water policy among the three factions.

However, one local water official does not accept the provisions of the agreement.

"The water that we are giving up is too much," said John Fawcett, Central California Irrigation District board member. "It is a big error."

A court-ordered deadline last week forced the parties into days of last-minute negotiations which resulted in the pact signing.

The new agreement provides that urban and agricultural water users will give up 450,000 acre-feet of water in a normal year, and up to 1.1 million acre-feet in an extended drought period. In exchange, water users get certainty in water supplies, and release from threats of still more water supply reductions because of the Endangered Species Act.

Key elements of the agreement favorable to water users include:

- Full crediting of the water taken for new water quality standards and Delta ESA requirements toward the 800,000 acre-feet already required under the Central Valley Project Improvement Act. This will likely result in a 10- to 15 percent increase in water

supplies on the Westside of the Valley.

- A three-year "shelf-life" guaranteeing that no additional water will be required even if additional species are listed under the ESA. Prior to this agreement, new listings of endangered species, such as the winter-run chinook salmon and the delta smelt, wreaked havoc on water users, reducing supplies with no guarantee that the further reductions wouldn't be imposed.

Fawcett said the new agreement establishes that farming and urban interests will lose an additional 450,000 acre-feet of water to environmental concerns.

"Agriculture is the only one that has given up anything all along," said Fawcett. "Over the last four or five years since the Central Valley Project Improvement Act has been enacted, they've taken our water, lowered our land values and have raised the cost of farming."

"Who is going to compensate us for our losses?" he asked.

Leading up to the recent agreement, environmental concerns say water pumped from the Delta to farming and urban interests south of the Delta, has destroyed fish populations and habitat for species such as winter-run salmon and Delta smelt.

Those concerns have led to lawsuits and legislation which have turned the pumps in the Delta off at crucial irrigation times, while fresh water was released into the bay. During times of drought, some irrigation districts have received as little as 35 percent of their

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### **THE CALIFORNIA WATER ACCORD:**

- Centers on water quality standards for the San Francisco Bay and Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta. More fresh water will be allowed to flow through the Delta, holding down salt water intrusion.
- Provides more reliable supplies for cities and farms, even though they will get somewhat less water. If more water is needed for newly endangered species, it would be purchased by the federal government from water users willing to sell.
- Means federal and state officials will jointly make environmental decisions in the Delta, with the overall ecology in mind.
- Provides for closer coordination of the federal and state waterworks that divert water from the Delta.
- Calls for greater environmental protections, such as installation of fish screens on water diversion pipes along the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers, without increasing the costs of water.

usual water supplies because of the legislation.

Pump stoppages have occurred despite farmers' plans for a larger supply of water.

Fawcett said the new agreement is supposed to give agricultural interests certain amounts of water they can plan around. But he believes the agreement just takes more water away from farmers.

"They're supposed to be giving us a stable supply," Fawcett said. "I say that a stable supply of nothing gives you nothing."

"The takes (water pumping stoppages) are determined by environmental interest," Fawcett said. "They are using poor science — or no science at all — to make their determinations."

"As farmers, we are having our livelihood dumped into the

San Francisco Bay for these environmental goals to save fish, which may not be based on scientific fact.

"It is very detrimental to agriculture and I don't know that we've gained that much. They say that we gained stability. But if we are only getting 20 percent of our water, I'm not sure that good or not."

"Our economy in the last 50 to 100 years has been based on this imported water. Our cities and farms have been built on a tenuous balance of imported surface water and a reliance on ground water."

"Now that significantly less water is available, the farmers are going to have to rely more on a groundwater supply that is rapidly diminishing. And once that is depleted, it is definitely going to hurt our area's economy."